



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; Modification to Gulf of Maine/Georges Bank Herring Letter of Authorization

AGENCY: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing information collections, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before [Insert date 60 days after date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER].

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Jennifer Jessup, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 6616, 14th and Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20230 (or via the Internet at JJessup@doc.gov).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument and instructions should be directed to Allison Murphy, 978-281-9122 or Allison.murphy@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

This request is for extension of a current information collection.

Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Secretary of Commerce has the responsibility for the conservation and management of marine fishery resources. We, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Regional Fishery Management Councils are delegated the majority of this responsibility. The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) develops management plans for fishery resources in New England.

In 2009, we implemented modifications to the requirements for midwater trawl vessels issued an All Areas Limited Access Herring Permit and/or an Areas 2 and 3 Limited Access Herring Permit that fish in Northeast (NE) multispecies Closed Area I (CA I). Affected vessels intending to fish in CA I at any point during a trip are required to declare their intention when scheduling a NMFS-approved at-sea observer. To ensure 100-percent observer coverage, midwater trawl vessels are not permitted to fish in CA I without an observer.

Midwater trawl vessels in the directed herring fishery that have been assigned a NMFS-approved at-sea observer and that are fishing in CA I, are prohibited, unless specific conditions are met (see below), from releasing fish from the codend of the net, transferring fish to another vessel that is not carrying a NMFS-approved observer, or

discarding fish at sea, unless the fish have first been brought aboard the vessel and made available for sampling and inspection by the observer.

We recognize that there are certain conditions under which fish must be released from the codend without being sampled. Therefore, fish that have not been pumped aboard the vessel may be released if the vessel operator finds that: Pumping the catch could compromise the safety of the vessel; mechanical failure precludes bringing some or all of a catch aboard the vessel; or spiny dogfish have clogged the pump and consequently prevent pumping of the rest of the catch. If a net is released for any of these three reasons, the vessel operator must complete and sign a CA I Midwater Trawl Released Codend Affidavit detailing where, when, and why the net was released as well as a good-faith estimate of both the total weight of fish caught on that tow and the weight of fish released (if the tow had been partially pumped). The completed affidavit form must be submitted to us within 48 hr of the completion of the trip.

Following the release of a net for one of the three exemptions specified above, the vessel is required to exit CA I. The vessel may continue to fish, but may not fish in CA I for the remainder of the trip.

II. Method of Collection

Respondents must submit paper forms via postal service.

III. Data

OMB Control Number: 0648-0602.

Form Number: None.

Type of Review: Regular submission (extension of a current information

collection).

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit organizations.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 46.

Estimated Time Per Response: 5 minutes.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 12.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: \$75.

IV. Request for Comments

Comments are invited on: (a) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden (including hours and cost) of the proposed collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for OMB approval of this information collection; they also will become a matter of public record.

Dated: June 27, 2012

Gwellnar Banks,

Management Analyst, Office of the Chief Information Officer.

Billing Code: 3510-22-S

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